

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS OF MID-TERM REVIEW WORKSHOP:
II ENCUENTRO HEMISFÉRICO MECANISMOS Y REDES PARA LA REDUCCIÓN DEL RIESGO,
SANTA MARTA, COLOMBIA

Date: 3 May 2010

Meeting in Santa Marta, Colombia on April 14, 2010, country and NGO representatives and academics discussed the progress, shortcomings and potential improvements of the Hyogo Framework for Action. Participants were divided into three groups, each with a different set of key questions aimed at obtaining specific perspectives as well as insights on the future implementation of the HFA through 2015 and beyond. *Group One* responded to questions 1, 2, and 3, *Group Two* responded to questions 4, 5 and 6, and *Group Three* responded to questions 7 and 8.

The following is a summary of the discussions of all three groups. Individual group responses to the posed questions can be found in the annex below.

Summary of the Workshop Discussions

Overall, the consensus was that the HFA is an important global tool that enables all actors to speak the same language, and in that respect, it connects various stakeholders and topics and encourages dialogue. Its usefulness is linked to the Priorities of Action which set out clear guidelines and through the National Platform a place has been created to discuss DRR. Nevertheless, greater awareness of DRR and incorporation of the HFA into policies are still needed. The lack of political will is the greatest impediment in this respect. The trickling down of policies that incorporate the HFA needs to be strengthened in order for it to reach the municipal policy level. Participants also expressed concern that the focus still remains on response to disasters as opposed to prevention. The commitment of authorities in the region is sporadic – increasing during periods of natural disasters.

A number of potential improvements were identified during the course of the discussions. It was noted that financial resources need to be strengthened. The HFA also needs to move away from its theoretical focus to include more practical information and examples. However, the concern was stronger with respect to the matter of national implementation as opposed to the framework itself which participants agreed provides a good basis for action. Concern was also raised over the fact that the HFA is not a legally binding instrument, and that this could be one area of improvement. Legal frameworks should be enhanced. Strengthening legislative processes and institutional international frameworks, revising regulation and increasing regulatory support were all identified as potential improvements. Establishing a technical, methodological and financial support mechanism for the preparation of country reports on the implementation of HFA as part of a participatory process was also suggested.

Additionally, participants found that private sector participation should continue to be encouraged, education on DRR should be promoted, and international awareness campaigns should be introduced. On another note, participants stressed the need for greater government focus on poverty reduction, while recognizing the differences among certain groups such as women, those with HIV or handicaps, and the elderly, which lead to vulnerability differences.

Overall, although the region as a whole is on the right path in reducing the underlying risk factors, participants recognized that this is a process that takes time and as such, they acknowledged the value of sharing experiences and knowledge and building on the common lessons learned. Participants expressed the importance of harmonizing the multiple frameworks and plans for better alignment and cohesion involving all sectors at the international, national and local levels.

Annex: Individual Group Responses

The following is a summary of the discussion of *Group One*, which responded to *questions 1, 2 and 3*.

Question 1: In your experience has the HFA been instrumental over the past five years in reducing disaster losses in communities and countries in country X/region Y?

At the university level, the HFA is not known of and therefore it has not had much effect in the sector of DRR. Strong policies in relation to DRR do not exist and the theme does not cut across sectors. Knowledge is only shared with individuals interested in the subject. Nevertheless, the academic sector recognizes the responsibility that it has but political will is still needed.

Five years is too short a period of time to be able to observe results and to have the international community convene to evaluate them. Systematization does not exist to be able to better observe impact.

Through the National Platform, a place has been created to be able to discuss the topic.

A Central American policy is in place that bases its multi-sectoral/cross-cutting axes on the five priorities of Hyogo.

Sub-Question 1.1: What are the three most important achievements that contributed to reduce disaster losses through the HFA implementation in country X/region Y?

The HFA is known to be a tool on the global level that allows us to speak the same language, with a new approach, besides being a process involving many elements. In addition, it is an agreement which is very different from all the rest that allows us to connect many actors and topics. The HFA enables local and native knowledge to be valued.

Significant awareness exists about the policies as well the number of actors and an increase of resources. There is also greater interaction between actors at national level (including agreements with universities).

Greater sensitization, more dialogue between the civil society and academia. The myth that disasters are not foreseeable has been reduced. More inter-agency work has been enabled.

Others have considered whether it has reached all countries and if the topic has reached the municipal level.

There has been a strengthening of the DRR in training and preparedness, as well as improvement in planning mechanisms, including risk, financial and material insurance, for the measurement of DRR with emphasis on local level.

Some believe that it is useful because the Priorities of Action give clear guidelines.

In the health sector, they have gone on from the safety of the hospital infrastructure to the safety of critical places.

Sub-Question 1.2: What are the three most important elements that prevented the HFA from achieving its intended outcome i.e. the reduction of disaster losses?

Limited capacity, insufficient resources at the national level and great vulnerability exist that prevent change within five years. Weak legal frameworks. Greater socialization and diffusion would be needed at government level. Too much focus in theoretical as opposed to the practical aspects.

Question 2: How has the HFA informed decision making or priority setting in country X/region Y?

The commitment of the authorities is temporary and it is related directly to the period of hurricanes. It is not a part of State policy in spite of being signed by the States. In spite of being a commitment of States it is continually handled like a government obligation.

On the other hand, strategic planning and DRR policy could have been incorporated into public policy.

The concept of DRR has been linked to the development and planning and not only in Civil Protection.

Question 3: What elements of the HFA have worked less well in reducing disaster risk in country X/region Y and why?

The relationship to disasters – development is not strong since the HFA is not reflected in programs. The response keeps on being stronger before prevention.

It is a very general framework because anything can reduce risk without knowing where it comes from. Also prioritization of topics is absent.

Sub-Question 3.1: What were the three most critical factors that prevented effectiveness in the areas identified in question 3 above?

Sub-Question 3.2: What are the specific constraints to start or increase investments in disaster risk reduction in country X/region Y?

Lack of financial resources - the topic does not sell. Lack of inter-agency competence for cooperation in deciding what must be done.

The following is a summary of the discussion of *Group Two*, which responded to *questions 4, 5 and 6*.

Question 4: In your experience, does the HFA sufficiently encourage community participation and the utilization of local knowledge to reduce disaster risk? I.e. in country X/region Y, have communities and local authorities been empowered and is local knowledge and community action being useful/tapped into to manage and reduce disaster risk? If so, how? If not, why not?

The group consensus was that the HFA does indeed sufficiently encourage community participation and the utilization of local knowledge to reduce disaster risk. Participants expressed that the HFA, as a tool, is well thought out but that the problem with ensuring sufficient participation and local knowledge lies rather with the national governments and authorities in applying the HFA within their national territories and at the local level in particular. In other words, the concern was felt to be a matter of national implementation as opposed to the framework itself which participants

agreed provides a good basis for action in support of these issues. Those countries with more years of working towards these issues are found to be significantly more advanced in these areas, as in the case of Jamaica where such activities have been in place since the 1990s and where the HFA merely served to support and consolidate the vision already in place.

As such, recommendations include strategies to greater articulate between the local and national levels, including a particular focus on how to better approach those that generate risk in their daily lives and for whom the HFA is secondary to more pressing and urgent priorities surrounding basic needs for daily subsistence.

The issue was raised of changes in society, particularly within the urban context, where communities were traditionally formed around concerns for resources as in the case of situating communities in close proximity to rivers in order to maximize the utility for daily use. Given, however, changes in the behaviour of such waterways and the hazards now present, such changes call for a need to adapt our own behaviours to these changes in the natural environment.

The main issues raised in this group involved aspects of good governance, political will and the short term restraints imposed by elections and changes in political parties that impede a longer term approach to development and therefore to concerns for disaster risk reduction.

Another issue on which the group was entirely in agreement involves the view that five years is too short a period of time to allow for a proper review in that the issues and actions raised by the HFA take time to reveal the results and impacts.

Of the barriers mentioned:

- The fact that the HFA is not legally binding and that with changes of government and therefore personnel much time and energy is devoted to sensitizing and awareness raising surrounding the importance of DRR and that it was adopted by States rather than governments;
- A need, in many cases, for country diagnostics (internal note: thus supporting the HFA Monitor reporting process);
- The focus of local governments on the short term (three year periods) and for permanent monitoring with municipal and local participation through a more inclusive process and ongoing communications and dialogue to further success (also supporting HFA reporting);
- The need for greater focus of governments on poverty reduction, while recognizing the differences among certain communities such as women, those with HIV or handicaps and the elderly which lead to differences in vulnerability.

The sub-questions (4.1 and 4.2) were not addressed specifically but rather were incorporated into the discussion mentioned above.

Question 5: In your experience is there in country X/region Y a culture of safety and resilience at the level of the general public? For example, do people in country X/region Y seek information about land safety, building structures, etc. prior to building or purchasing properties? Do they expect politicians to have national and local disaster risk reduction plans in place? Do they acquire, or are required by law to acquire, insurance for their properties, crops and livelihoods if they live in disaster prone areas? Are they fully informed, trained if necessary, and equipped about what needs to be done in case of a disaster?

This question was not addressed in this group. Due to time constraints the group opted for moving directly to Question 6.

Question 6: How can implementation of HFA Priority Action 4, reducing the underlying risk factors, be strengthened?

Agencies such as the Red Cross and NGOs were mentioned for their significant contributions to overcoming some of the obstacles for reaching the local level, in turn supporting actions for reducing the underlying factors of risk.

As for the integration of DRR into development policies and programmes, the main consensus among participants was that there are specific successful cases but not necessarily in an institutionalized or systematic way.

The region as a whole is seen to be quite advanced in these issues and although on the right path, participants recognize that it is a process that takes time and therefore are cognizant of the value of sharing experiences and building on the common lessons learned and knowledge. Often, much experience is the result of necessity. When events happen countries must take action. This action, in turn, is what strengthens longer term planning through the recognized need to focus not only on emergency response but on the underlying factors of risk.

In terms of how global events can accelerate this process, the Red Cross provides a good example of how to better approach the local level and the suggestion arose that this could be part of national planning to promote activities and actions involving the local level. There was an expressed recognition of the need to align national actions with the basic tenets and priorities of the HFA (following the example of the Andean region) and the need for ongoing feedback and dialogue between the national and local levels. Participants expressed the importance of harmonizing the multiple frameworks and plans for better alignment and cohesion involving all sectors.

Legislature was mentioned (as in the case of Costa Rica) as a means for integrating DRR into development policies and programmes as well as land-use planning (zoning, building codes, etc.), greater coherence among development and DRR policies, DRR considerations within local and municipal governments for the issuing of permits and sanctions or punitive measures in cases when DRR measures are not taken, as well as advocacy and partnership building with stakeholders.

The following is a summary of the discussion of Group Three, which responded to questions 7 and 8.

Question 7: What are the three most important things now that country X/region Y would benefit from, from the international community, in furthering the implementation of the HFA at the national and local level?

- Encourage private sector participation to be active and to identify what they are already doing and disseminate it as a way to enhance their involvement, while encouraging corporate social responsibility.
- The leading role of army in the aftermath of a disaster and strengthening legislative processes and institutional international frameworks, revision of laws, regulations and regulatory support.
- Promote education; capacity building and institutional frameworks as well of enhancement of exchange of knowledge and information based south-south cooperation.
- International awareness campaign and outreach at all levels of the Hyogo Framework for Action, aiming specifically on local, community levels.

Sub-Question 7.1: What adjustments, if any, would be helpful in the international structures of disaster risk reduction to help accelerate the implementation of the HFA?

- Harmonize policies to support DRR considering standardized methodologies and schedules of aid, as well of homogenization of aid protocols.
- Facilitate coordination processes of international agendas for the implementation of the HFA.
- Support national processes of "localization" of HFA and promoting the involvement of local/community levels on it.

Sub-Question 7.2: What kind of financial instruments, as well as monitoring mechanisms, would be helpful in support of DRR action at the national, local and community level?

- Set a Risk Management Fund conditional on country performance in public policies associated with the 5 areas of action of the HFA.
- Condition disaster response funds for use by promoting the prevention and risk reduction. That the international financial instruments, credit, etc. should be considered as a mechanism to strengthen local mechanisms for monitoring and accountability for international and national agencies.
- Establish a technical, methodological and financial support mechanism for the preparation of country reports on the implementation of HFA as part of a participatory process (similar to UNFCCC's National Communications process).

Sub-Question 8.1: Would setting up specific international and national targets help improving DRR impact at the national and local level?

The group consensus was that it will be an added value for the current efforts on make legal and institutional advances in the improvement of the HFA mainly at national level, and to set clear and measurable commitments even at local level. Also taking into account considerations identify in question N° 7 and proposing a system of indicators aimed toward that end.

Sub-Question 8.2: What kind of international institutional structures/instruments would be most helpful to continue to accelerate and support risk reduction work?

It was not identified an international structure/instruments but it was clear, at least for the participants in this group, that any structure or instrument that is designed or put in place for DRR beyond 2015 should consider be useful up to the local/community level.

Sub-Question 8.3: The HFA is a voluntary international instrument. Has the voluntary nature of the HFA played a positive or negative role in its implementation and buy-in at the international and national level?

Even though the voluntary nature of HFA has been the basis for DRR focus at national level, mainly because there was recognized a national/local component in shaping the vulnerabilities of the countries and consequently the impacts of natural hazards could be attributed to those national conditions. However at the light of current and future climate change that is affecting the face of natural hazards as well of posing new menaces that will hit more intensely on developing countries, hampering sustainable development. Therefore in the UNFCCC is clearly recognized that countries have common but differentiated responsibilities, therefore we deem necessary to consider a binding agreement due to the new conditions and roles of countries in changing climate related hazards and to help developing countries to overcome the risk arousing from that new condition.

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